

Statement to the ABC

Syngenta takes any issues with our products very seriously and as a company that takes pride in our commitment to Australian farming we set our own internal standards that are well above the industry and regulatory standards.

Within just a few weeks from being informed by the product manufacturer of the contamination issue in the last week of December 2016 and notifying the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA), Syngenta reviewed the impurity levels and completed a scientific risk assessment of potential adverse effects on environment, animal/aquatic, crop safety and residue levels. This risk assessment considered the APVMA assessments and approved application rates for the products from which the contaminants originated. Each of the results fell well below the active ingredient rates that would cause damage or adverse effects.

Although the scientific assessments confirmed the risk as extremely low and concluded that the products would not cause crop damage, we proceeded to withdraw the product batches from all the retailers we sold them to as these products did not meet our high internal quality standards. We also asked the product manufacturer to conduct further tests on every single batch manufactured at the site since they began manufacturing the products for us. This led to the second voluntary withdrawal process in mid-2017.

Like every other company that has had the misfortune of such an occurrence, this voluntary withdrawal process was conducted in-line with the APVMA's voluntary withdrawal guidelines and in consultation with the APVMA. Syngenta was confident that given the low-level of contamination assessment, the low level of usage rates of the respective products and the lack of any product complaints to date, direct engagement with retailers (email and follow-up phone calls) given their direct contact with farmers, was the best course of action under the APVMA guidelines.

Syngenta does not have access to the contact details of every farmer in Australia but has in the past reached out to farmer representative groups to seek their assistance in informing their members of voluntary withdrawals if there are immediate concerns with being able to reach every single retailer. We will continue to work with farmer representative groups and other agriculture industry organisations in the future to continue to improve direct engagement methods with farmers across the country.

Syngenta has a long-standing reputation of providing high-quality agricultural products to farmers around the world. Our values are at the core of everything we do at Syngenta and it is disconcerting to hear from the ABC that farmers are 'afraid of raising product concerns'. For this reason, Syngenta has appointed an independent research agronomist, Anova Agriculture, to assist them in addressing any potential concerns that growers may have with the voluntarily withdrawn batches of GESAGARD or PRIMEXTRA GOLD. The discussions are on a confidential basis and will not be disclosed to industry. Syngenta hopes that the confidentiality of the discussions will enable any growers who do still have concerns with the withdrawn contaminated batches to come forward so that their issues can be addressed.

Attributable to a Syngenta Australia spokesperson